



Ballabeg, Arbory

*Preliminary character appraisal*

*Patricia A Tutt*

*For Office of Planning*

*May 2009, updated July 2010*

*Ballabeg character appraisal:*

## Purpose and Scope

---

This Appraisal has been prepared at the request of the Conservation Officer, Office of Planning. Its purpose has been to carry out a preliminary assessment of the townscape character of Ballabeg, with a view to establishing whether the village, or any part of it, merits the designation of Conservation Area.

With strict instructions not to engage with residents or appear to show interest in their property, this is, perforce, a somewhat superficial overview. Some buildings or groups of buildings merit further investigation, as indicated in the gazetteer pages.

The Appraisal has been carried out by Patricia A Tutt, Dip Arch, RIBA, Cert Ed, ARPS.

3 Patrick Street  
Peel  
IM5 1BP  
E: [patricia.tutt@manx.net](mailto:patricia.tutt@manx.net)

May 2009, updated July 2010

---

## Contents

---

Evolution and landscape context	4
The key features of Ballabeg	8
Village character	9
Visual features: townscape character	10
SWOT analysis	12
The use of Limestone as a construction material in Ballabeg	13
Planning policy for Ballabeg	14
Conclusions	15
Zonal breakdown	18
Gazetteer of buildings in Ballabeg	20
1. North of Main Road: Enveenidel to Vicarage Close	
2. Vicarage and Arbory Parish Church	
3. Parville, Parville Lodge and The Coach House	
4. Buildings south of the Main Road, between the Stores and Ballabeg Pumping Station	
5. Arbory Parish Hall to B42 junction	
6. Ballacubbon Close and Ballacubbon	
7. Rosedene, Smithy to Cooil Aalin Veg (stream)	
8. Tramman House to White Cottage	
9. Friary Farm	
10. Friary Park	
11. Friary Cottages to The Bungalow	
12. Douglas Road, old cottages (1-6) to Thie Aroha	
13. Douglas Road, South View to Ballanorris Cottage	
14. New Road (south of Ballabeg)	
References and sources	48

## Evolution and landscape context



*Ballabeg – marking the margin between the fertile coastal plain and the hills. Arbory Parish Church (St Columba) is in the centre, with the white bulk of Parville to the right of it. The white render of Vicarage Close is to the left. This view is from the vicinity of the railway bridge on New Road.*

The village of Ballabeg forms part of one of the Isle of Man's longer stretches of ribbon development, adjoining the road that runs between the bottom of the Ballamodha Straight and Ballakillowey, a distance of approximately four miles. Whilst this development is not fully continuous (there are breaks between Ballamodha and Ballabeg, and between Ballabeg and Colby), and is mostly limited to one side of the road, the perception is of a lengthy strip of cottages, villas and bungalows with few notable highpoints, other than pub, pump, glen, railway halt and shop.

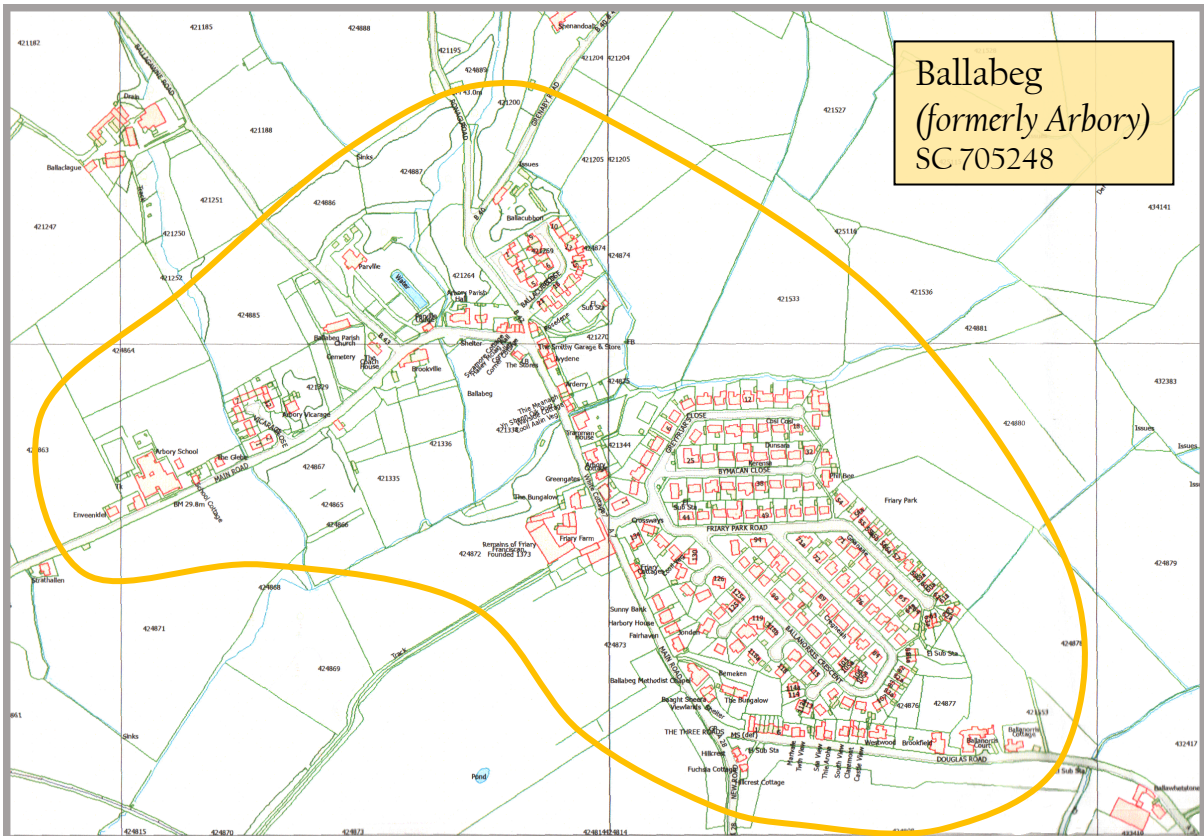
The road marks the transition from plain to hill, with just a few large farms holding the prime arable land of the plain. This roadside linear settlement is at an altitude of about 100 metres in the marginal strip, and then there is a second string of farms at an altitude of about 200 metres on the slopes above Ballabeg and Colby. The liminal context is very distinctive, especially when seen from a distance (as above). It is unclear as to which came first in this relationship, the road, or the agricultural communities on the boundaries of the big farms. The restriction of development to the north side of the road, suggests the latter, despite the undoubted age of the road.

All the roadside communities have been much smaller in the recent past, with most being a gradual expansion of cottages in the vicinity of larger farms, or around road junctions. Some expansion will also have followed the construction of the steam railway, which passes through Ballabeg and Colby.

Ballabeg marks a bend in the road, punctuated by the shop (currently being rebuilt), and it has two B roads joining the Main Road within the village (B42 and B43). These roads are old. They would appear to mark quarterland or *treen* boundaries and so would date from the establishment of these land boundaries, which pre-date the establishment of the parishes on the acquisition of Man by the English Crown.



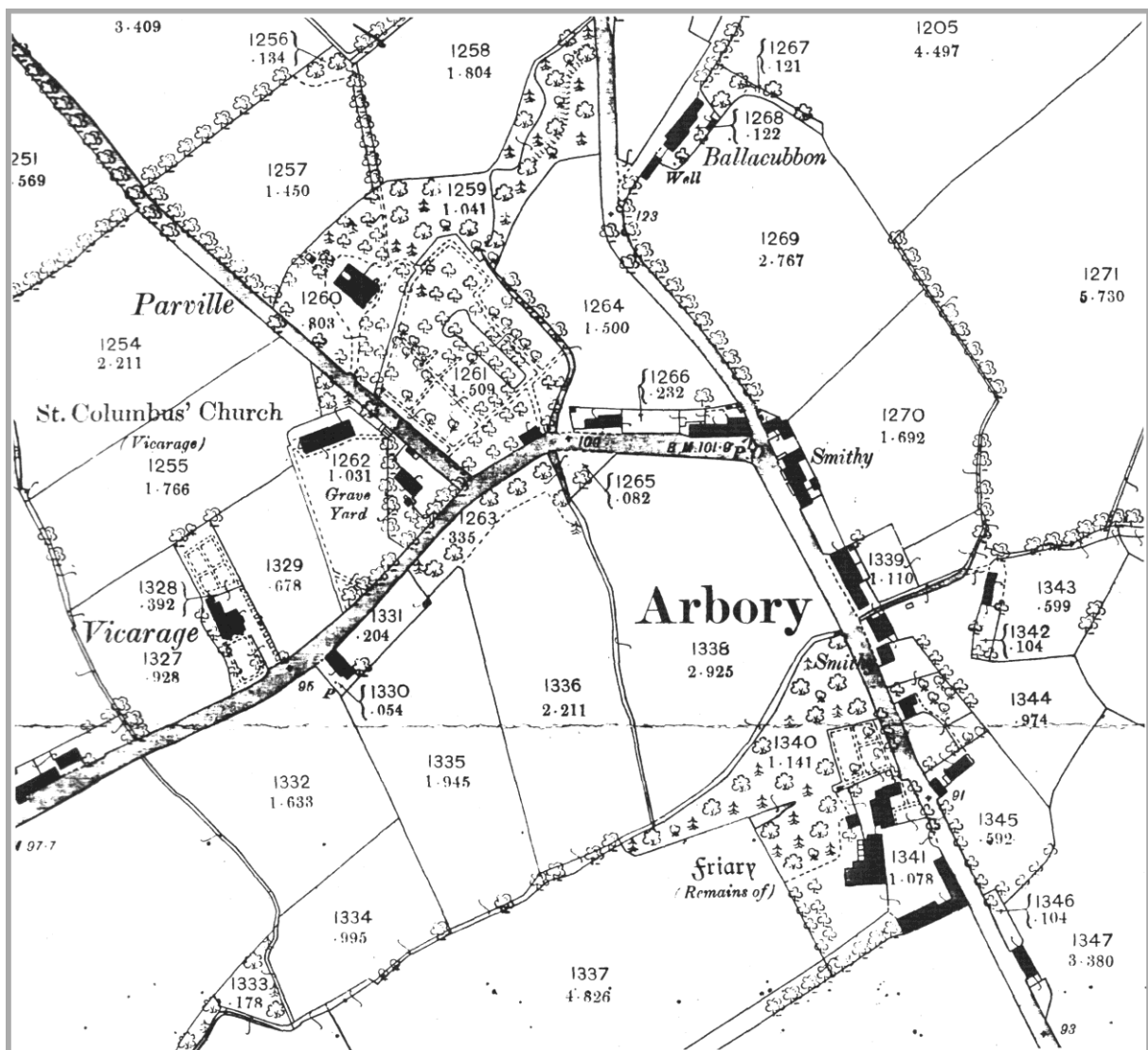
Aerial view of Ballabeg – a rural scene except for the regimented lines of Friary Park and, to a lesser extent, Ballacubbon Close. Image: Google Earth/Isle of Man Government.



The current map of Ballabeg, showing the extent covered by this appraisal. Map: Isle of Man Government, 2009.

The B42 Grenaby Road (which forks to form the Ronague Road) links the Ballamaddrell and Ballavarkish farms/estates to Ballabeg, whilst the B43 Ballagawne Road forms a link to Earystane, passing the Ballaclague, Ballacross, Ballacurphey and Ballagawne farms/estates. Most of these estates are ancient in origin, whilst all are of significant size. Until comparatively recently, they would have played a significant role in the community and parish. Slater's Directory of 1857 notes that the village held two annual cattle fairs – indicative of the scale of the agriculture in the parish. At the south-east end of the village, the main road is joined by New Road, linking Ballabeg with the Castletown/Pooylvaish/Gansey road.

The village of Ballabeg only gained that name on recent maps. Previously, it was known as Arbory, as shown on earlier Ordnance Survey maps. The church and the school both retain the name of Arbory, whilst other buildings such as the Methodist Chapel, use the name Ballabeg. Ballabeg means 'little place'. There was a farm or smallholding in Arbory that was known as 'Ballabeg' (exact location not certain) and at some time in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century this name came to be applied to the whole settlement, in lieu of 'Arbory'.



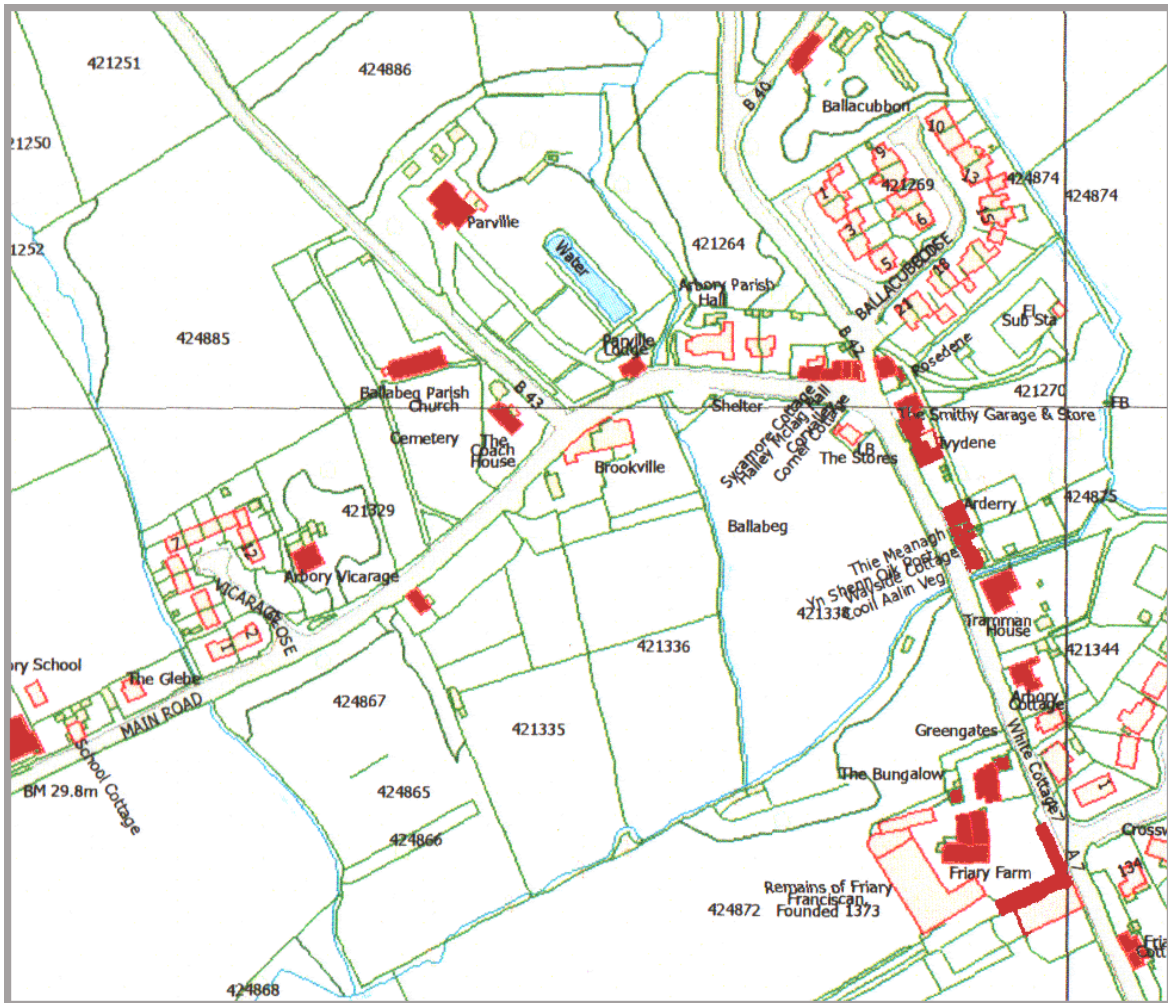
Extract from the 1860's OS map, showing the centre of Ballabeg. The village is named 'Arbory'. Note the transcription error in the name of the church – Columbus rather than Columba. Map: Manx National Heritage.

The initial ‘anchor’ in the village would have been Abbey Farm, the site of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan Friary at Bemaken. The remains of the friary are incorporated into the present farm buildings, which will have had some historical link with the group of limestone cottages and former smithy across the road, between the junctions with the B42 Grenaby Road and New Road.

Subsequently, the Church of St Columba, Arbory Parish Church, which was dedicated in 1759, took over that ‘anchor’ role. Parville, the large house adjacent to the church, the vicarage adjacent to the church, and the other large farms in the vicinity will all have played a significant role in village life. The farms had a number of influential owners and family dynasties. Some landowners were MHKs, Captain of the Parish, or held other important roles.

More recently, there has been the construction of housing estates, large and small – housing a mix of local residents, retirees, and people who commute to Douglas or elsewhere. In Ballabeg, Friary Park is an unfortunate large early example from the ‘sixties or ‘seventies, and Ballacubbon Close a more sophisticated recent development from the late ‘nineties. Both suffer from ‘developers’ layout syndrome’, being more interested in site density than in respecting aspect, orientation or contour. Entering both, one is confronted by a sea of tarmac. Fortunately, both are sited away from Main Road, and in that respect, are well sited, so don’t obtrude.

The village features in sporting events, especially the ‘Southern Hundred’ and the ‘Parish Walk’.



Current map showing the same central area as the 1860s map on the previous page. Structures present on the older map are shown in solid red (based on interpolation – some may have been rebuilt).

## The key features of Ballabeg

---

The notable features of Ballabeg (discussed in more detail in the next section) are:

- St Columba – Arbory Parish Church, graveyard and vicarage
- Parville
- 14<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan Friary at Friary Farm (not particularly evident from the road, or open to view – but important)
- Arbory Primary School
- the groups of un-rendered limestone cottages fronting the road – probably the best on the island, outside Castletown
- major farms (some, historical quarterland farms) in the village, on the periphery, and further up the slopes behind the village, and
- the three housing estates (Vicarage Close, Friary Park, Ballacubbon Close).

NB: As the author has not been permitted to approach the residents and property owners of Ballabeg, observations are based on what can be seen from the road, or gleaned from various archives, including the web. The parish church is the only building that has been entered.



*Limestone cottages north of the stream running through Ballabeg, some with traditional gateposts*



## Ballabeg: village character

Villages develop around hubs – places where people meet, trade and socialise. Traditionally, they have arisen at travel hubs (junctions) where the dynamic of transient population density encourages the development of market, church, pub and shop. The designation ‘village’ implies the presence of a modest cluster of houses and cottages, sustained by some of these hub features.

In the case of Ballabeg, the hub features are (or have been in the recent past): feeder roads, church and vicarage, school, shop, smithy/garage, post office, parish hall, chapel and large houses and farms. There is no evidence for there ever being a market, or public house. The author lived (briefly, in 1965) in Parville Lodge, at which time the Post Office was still operational and the shop was very busy, but the smithy had gone, although the smithy at the Ballamodha/Douglas Road junction was still functioning. (There is no sign of the latter, now. It was demolished shortly after it stopped being used.)

Now, Ballabeg is sustained by the recent housing developments at Friary Park and Ballacubbon Close. These ensure the continuity of school and church, and, remarkably, the shop, currently being rebuilt. The Parish Hall also appears to be well used for community activities and evening classes.



Hubs – recent and current: feeder roads (green); key buildings (red) farms (yellow).

*Ballabeg character appraisal:*

## Visual features: townscape character

---

From a distance (see photo, page 3), the church and Parville dominate, but on transit through the village, it is the bulk of Friary farm and the sweep of roadside cottages that catch the eye.



*Cottages at the heart of the village, seen from the little parking/green space opposite Parville. The shop site is enclosed with Heras fencing. The former smithy is at the centre, with the arched coach/cart doorway. These cottages face south-west, across a farm field. All but one are of un-rendered limestone.*



*Cottages to the left of the view in the top photograph. A dynamic little group of one and two-storeys. Only the end cottage, adjoining the Grenaby Road junction, remains un-rendered limestone.*



*Parish Hall, national flag, post box and telephone kiosk. The latter may not last long, as mobile phone usage becomes more or less universal.*



*Parville: when the trees are out, it will be barely visible.*

## SWOT analysis

---

### STRENGTHS

- size of community, sustained by recent housing developments
- viability of shop
- hub activity provided by church, school and parish hall
- commanding position on major road, with feeder roads from hinterland
- surrounded by major farms
- charm of modest limestone cottages

### WEAKNESSES

- lack of built density and richness, due to absence of development on south side of road
- lack of off-street parking for shop and parish hall
- absence of public community green space (there is a token green/parking space opposite Parville Lodge)
- the halt and railway line do not pass through the village or impinge significantly; there is no parking at the halt

### OPPORTUNITIES

- there is a current (2009) campaign for allotments on the fringe of the village – a further opportunity for enrichment
- Friary Farm could become a hub once again – as historic monument, visitor centre, etc
- The limestone cottages ought to be recognised as an asset, to be protected as a group
- Should some farmers release land for development, great care would need to be taken to ensure that the village character was enhanced rather than dissipated
- The churchyard could engage more with the community at the junction of the churchyard with the main road
- Similarly, Parville could become more of a community or heritage hub
- The Vicarage is due to be released onto the market for redevelopment or refurbishment, with the potential to become another active hub

### THREATS

- Inappropriate extension of ribbon development
- Inappropriate alterations, extensions, or uses of existing buildings, especially the limestone cottages
- Dissipation of village character by inappropriate development of infill or new sites within the core of the village
- Deterioration of Friary Farm and loss of heritage
- Long-term viability of shop (indications are hopeful, with the rebuilding exercise in progress).

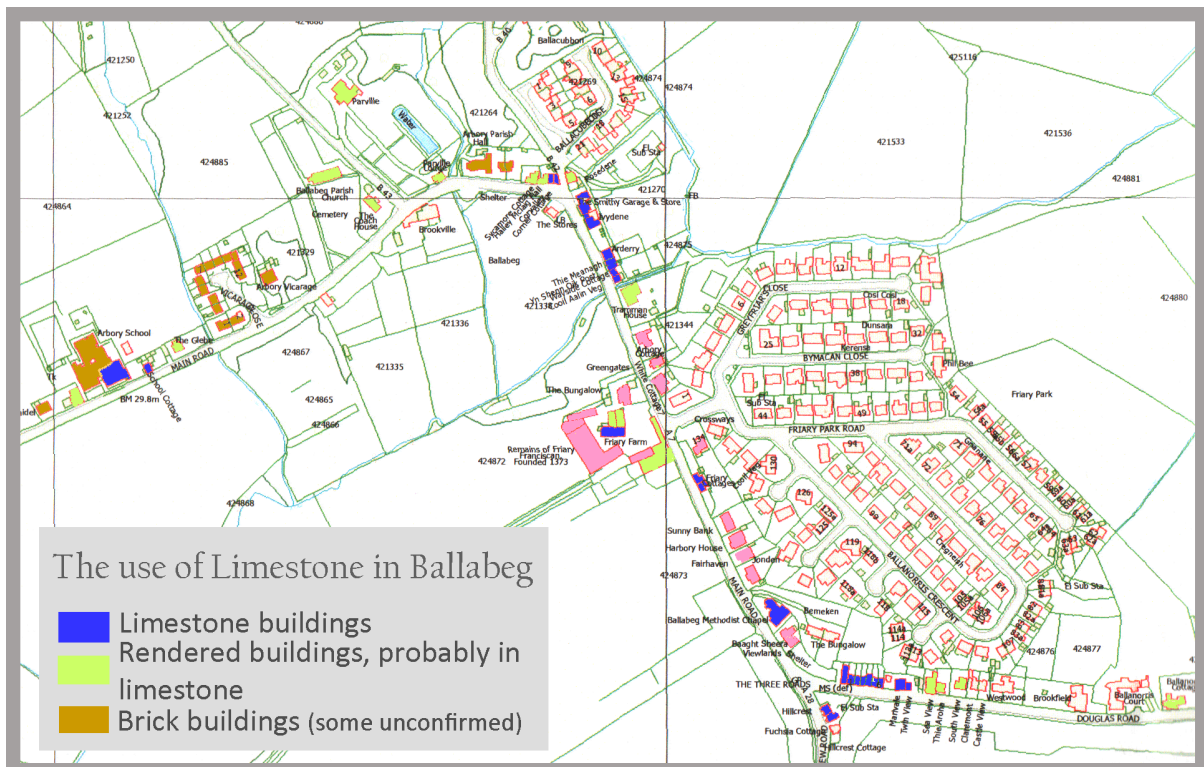
## The use of Limestone as a construction material in Ballabeg

Limestone is a highly localised construction material in the Isle of Man, as it only occurs in the south-east between Derbyhaven and Pooylvaish, with the main quarrying area being at Billown, a short distance from Ballabeg. Limestone buildings are found in Castletown, Derbyhaven, Ballasalla and Ballabeg, where it was the principal construction material. Elsewhere, the use of limestone is sporadic, with it only being used in special circumstances. Clearly, therefore, use was limited by transportation distance. Today, the only limestone that is regularly quarried is that used for lime, and Pooyvaish ‘marble’ – a black limestone used for decorative work such as fireplace surrounds.

Limestone has a distinctive colour and texture, and can be worked to produce regular blocks of masonry, facilitating the construction of more sophisticated designs, as can be seen in the larger buildings in Castletown.

Ballabeg and Ballasalla are the principal examples of its use in a village setting. In both places, there is a mix of buildings in natural limestone, and buildings where the limestone has been covered in render, which is either whitewashed or dashed. The remaining un-rendered buildings give a distinctive character to this corner of the Isle of Man, and merit special conservation status to ensure their ongoing protection and maintenance.

The map, below, shows the identified limestone buildings (in blue) and those buildings which are, or may be, in limestone, under render (in lime green). There may be others, which have not been identified: those in pink need verification.



## Planning Policy for Ballabeg

The Isle of Man Planning Scheme (Arbory and East Rushen Local Plan) Order 1999 was approved by Tynwald on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1999 and came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1999. It outlined the following *policies and proposals*.

### **BG/P/1**

19:14 New dwellings in Ballabeg shall be limited to those areas designated for residential use in Map 7.

### **BG/P/2**

19:15 In order to protect its character and setting, no further dwellings shall be permitted in the grounds of Parville.

### **BG/P/3**

19:16 Encouragement and support will be given to any reasonable proposals to extend or replace the existing shop in Ballabeg. Such extensions or replacements must take place only within the area designated as Development Area 18. Any proposal for significant alterations or extensions or replacement of the shop must include provisions for car parking and must represent a visual improvement to the existing facility.

#### Development brief 18 – Ballabeg shop

- a. Development shall not extend beyond the development boundaries on Map 7
- b. Provision for off-street parking must be made as an integral part of any development proposals.

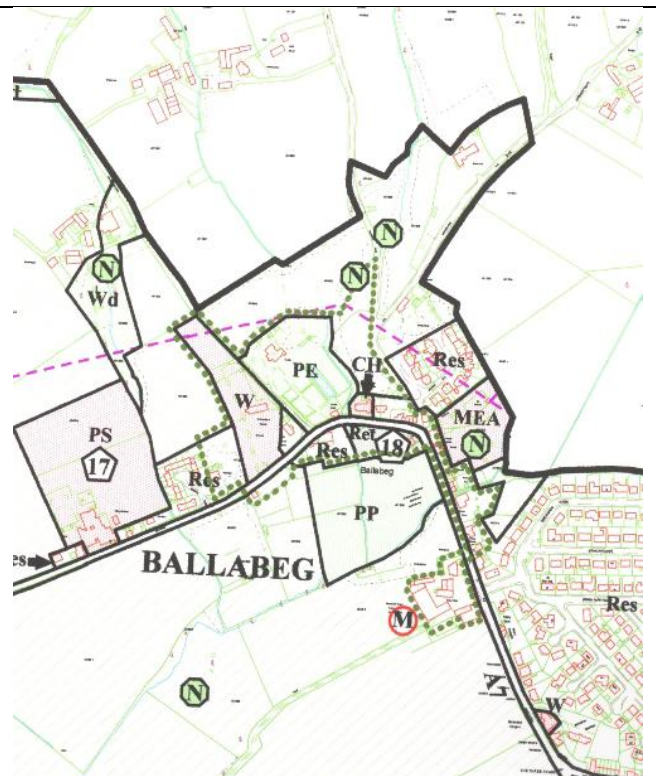
### **Proposal BG/PR/1**

19:17 it is proposed that parts of Ballabeg be designated Conservation Area in accordance with the boundaries illustrated on Map 7.

Map 7, referred to in the proposals, above, and in the table on page 14 (middle column) The Conservation Area, as then proposed, is designated by the green dotted line.

The document incorporated a review of suggestions made in a local consultation exercise, which had highlighted the following issues:

- school expansion
- further housing development
- provision of recreational space
- expansion of the shop and provision of associated parking
- creation of a Conservation Area, taking care not to compromise the viability of successful working farms (such as Friary Farm), whilst, at the same time, protecting the architectural integrity of farm buildings, and possible re-routing of the main road south of Ballabeg.



## Conclusions

---

### **Limits of this appraisal**

This appraisal only considers the merits of individual buildings and the townscape character of the main thoroughfare through Ballabeg. It does not weigh the importance of farms or other buildings on the periphery, nor does it consider the historic landscape, except where they have contributed to the form and scale of the village.

The author of this preliminary appraisal has not been authorised to approach residents or enter the curtilage of property, and can therefore only make recommendations on the basis of what can be seen from the road. The only building entered is the church. As a consequence, there may be other buildings in and around Ballabeg that merit protection in some manner.

### **Observations and recommendations**

Whilst superficially seeming to lack distinction, Ballabeg does have three special characteristics:

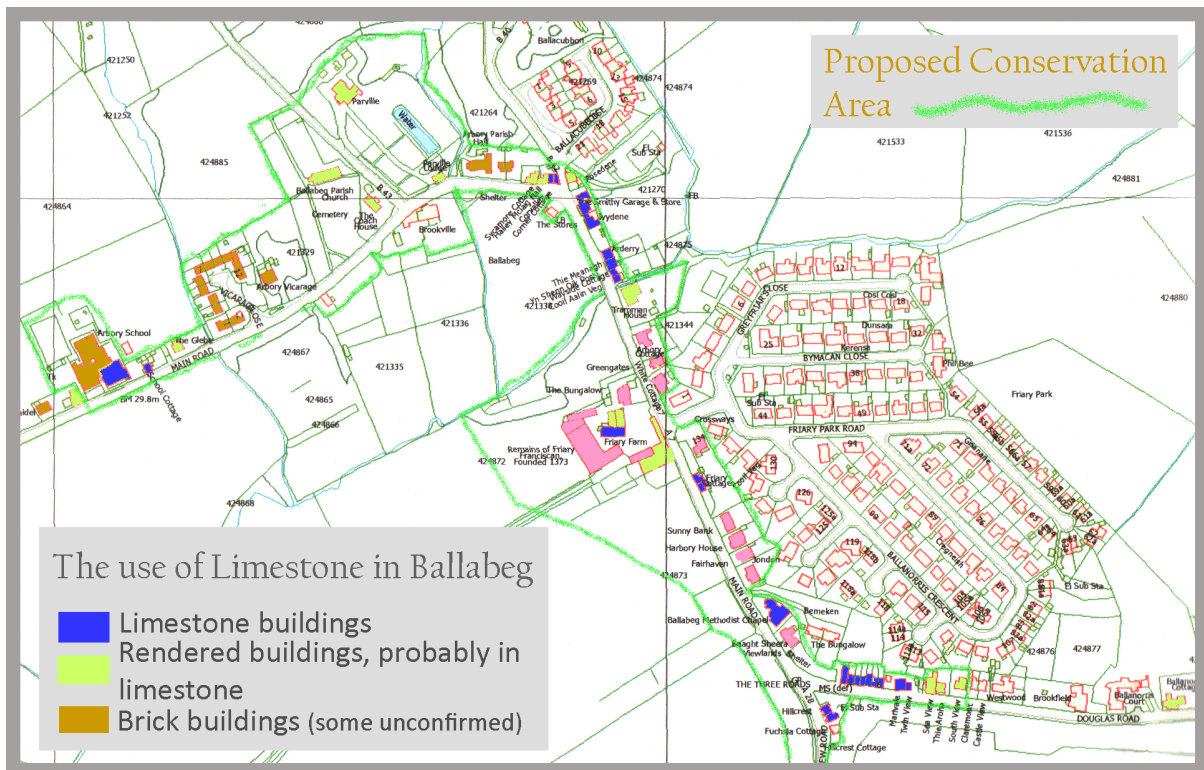
- It contains a number of significant buildings (on grounds of both architectural and historic merit),
- It has a distinctive, albeit modest, townscape character and
- It represents the village use of an important but highly localised building material.

On these grounds, it is recommended that it be designated a Conservation Area.

### **Purposes of conservation**

The purpose of conservation status would be to:

- Identify those buildings, characteristics and elements that have particular merit
- To put in place mechanisms to ensure that these buildings, characteristics and elements can be defended, protected, maintained and, where appropriate restored or enhanced
- To protect the designated area from inappropriate development or intrusion
- To protect individual buildings, characteristics and elements from inappropriate alteration, extension, defacement or other material change which might detract from their conservation merit
- To identify opportunities and threats which may add to or detract from the architectural, townscape or historic character of Ballabeg
- Alert the residents of Ballabeg to the merits of their environment, and encourage their participation in its protection and enhancement.



*Proposed extent of Conservation Area delineated in green*

### **Buildings, characteristics and elements of particular merit**

- **Arbory Parish Church of St Columba and Vicarage:** whilst the building has lost its Manx character and has no particular merit, it contains a number of significant monuments, both within the church and in the graveyard. The church is a key focal point in village life, especially now that Laa Columb Killey has been revived, and the monuments to Captain Quilliam have gained importance. Any changes made to the church, graveyard or their vicinity must be carefully scrutinised to ensure the ongoing protection or enhancement of the church and its surroundings. This includes the vulnerable Vicarage, as it is no longer used by the church and is to be sold. Any proposals for its refurbishment or for its demolition and replacement must not detract from the village townscape or church environs. This presents an opportunity for enhancement, which should not be squandered.
- **Parville and Parville Lodge:** despite the lack of architectural merit in the endlessly-altered Parville, the house, gardens, garden enclosures and lodge all make a significant and attractive whole which appears to be in the process of regeneration and engagement with village life. This should be protected, as indicated in the 1999 Policy document. The garden may contain significant historical features of period landscape design.
- **Friary Farm:** without authority to approach the owner, it has not been possible to evaluate the range of buildings on this centrally-located farm, or assess their condition, which may, in some respects, be vulnerable due to neglect or erosion. The Friary Chapel is an important historical building and the three storey five bay farmhouse is also significant.



- **The limestone buildings:** Ballabeg contains a significant group of limestone cottages. With the occurrence and constructional use of limestone being very restricted in the Isle of Man, Ballabeg and Ballasalla are the only examples of its use in village contexts. Whilst some limestone buildings have been rendered and/or painted, enough remain to justify their being given special status in order to ensure their preservation.

**The farms and large houses in the hinterland of Ballabeg:** these have not been appraised in this study, but the farms and large houses in the vicinity all contribute to the viability of Ballabeg, and some have historic buildings, including:

- Ballamaddrell – believed to be the earliest surviving quarterland farm
  - Balladoole – a fine if much altered three storey, five bay house
  - Ballanorris – house and barns.
- 
- **Townscape character:** the peculiarity of Ballabeg, is manifest in three ways:
    - Development is mostly restricted to one side of the road, giving clear views to the south and west
    - The village is positioned between the arable farming land on the plain and the slopes behind
    - The church and Parville provide significant anchors in the village, boosted by the shop and Parish Hall.

Whilst these features do not, in themselves, merit conservation status, they provide underpinning points of interest which add cohesion to the whole.